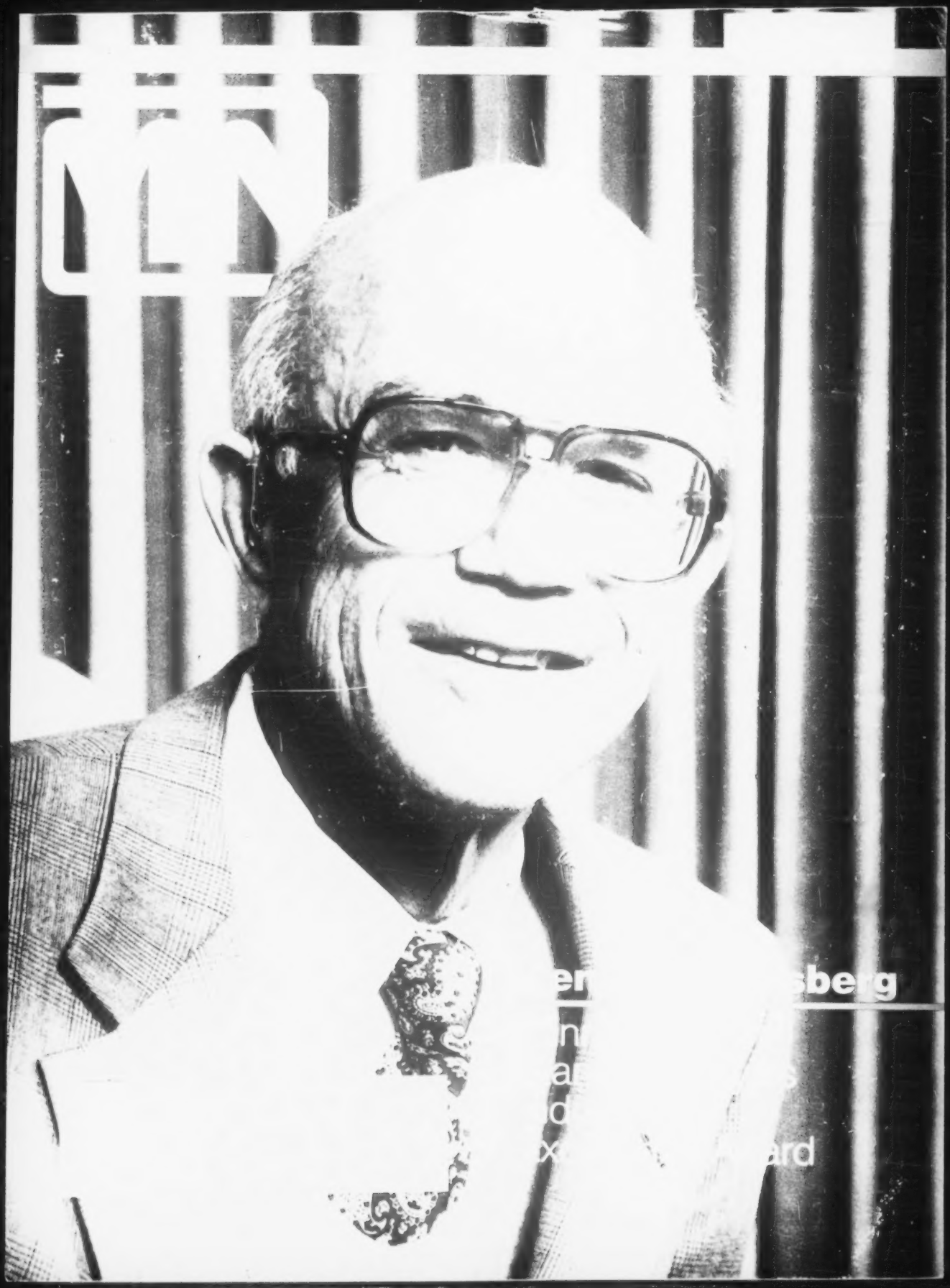

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Cover photo: Bob Stichel

75% of Distributors Enjoy Their Job, Have Pride In Firm

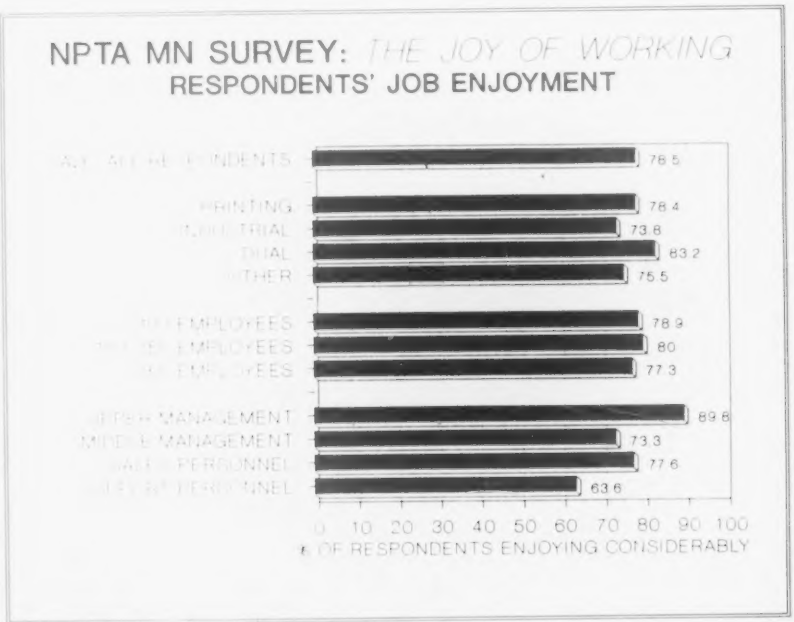
Job satisfaction is so strong that 82% plan to remain with the same firm during the next three years.

More than three-quarters of those individuals that work in the paper and plastics distribution industry enjoy their job and have considerable pride in the company that employs them.

Indeed, job satisfaction is so strong that 82% plan to remain with the same firm during the next three years. That's up three percentage points over figures obtained last year.

More than likely, these opinions directly correlate to the respondents' sense of sharing in their firm's success, that performance is rewarded, and that their superiors are approachable, according to research data.

These are just a few of the trends identified in *Management News'* recent Joy of Working survey, its second annual.



256 Responded To the Survey

Two hundred and fifty-six respondents answered the survey questionnaire, which was published in the March 1989 issue of *MN*. Of those responding to the survey, 36% were from dual companies, 26% came from the industrial side, 20% were from printing paper houses and 18% were from supplier companies.

The bulk of those responding—34%—were in sales positions; 30% were in middle management spots, 27% were upper management types and 9% were in support functions. More than half of the respondents (52%) said they were from companies that employed fewer than 100 people; 18% stated they worked for firms that employed 100-250 people; and 30% reported they were employed by firms with more than 250 on staff.

The majority of those responding to the study—78.5%—said they enjoy their work, and about the same number of respondents—78.1%—were proud of their firm. Not surprisingly, those on the upper management level expressed a positive feeling about their company more often than did other staff members.

What is somewhat surprising is that the number of individuals with company pride increased as the company size increased. Traditionally, those who work for a large corporation often are out of touch with their company's strategies and goals, leaving them with a feeling of detachment. But *MN* research shows that a little under 83% of those respondents who worked for the largest firms felt proud of their employer. Close to 78% of those employed by mid-size firms expressed the same feeling, and about three-quarters of those working for firms with fewer than 100 people had pride in their company. This positive trend for large companies is reflected in other statistics, indicating that these firms are making an effort to satisfy their staff. (More on this later.)

Employees Are Staying Put

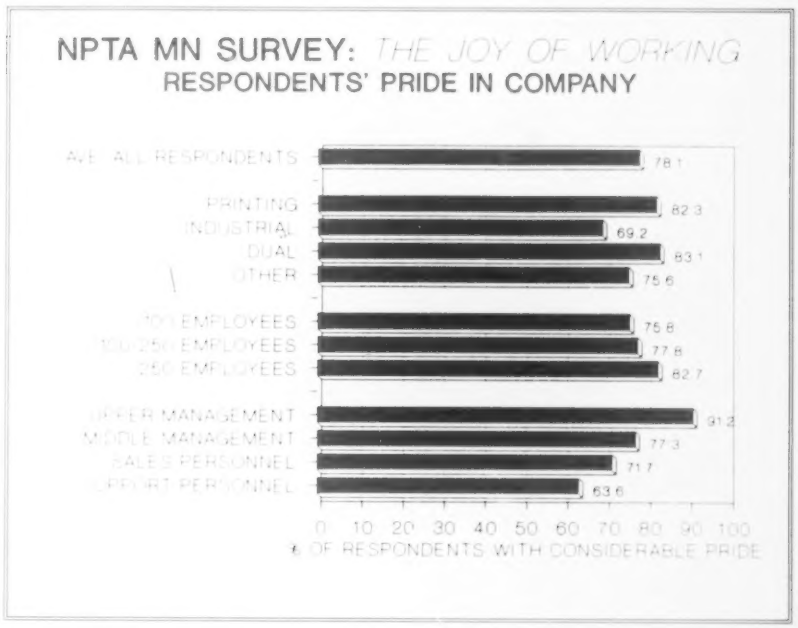
On the whole, however, paper/plastics distribution companies must be doing something right because the majority of those employed in the industry are staying where they are. Eighty-two percent of those responding to the survey expect to stick with the same company over the next three years. Last year's survey revealed that 79% anticipated remaining with their current firm during the same time frame. These data reflect the stability and growth of the industry as a whole during the past few years and the predictions for continued strong business in the near term.

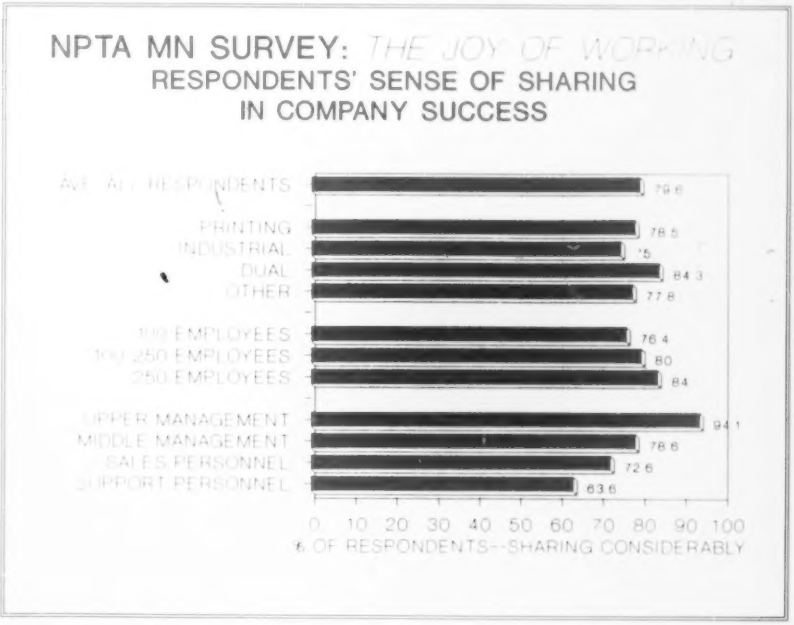
As it stands now, the industry is abundant with people who have been loyal to their employers. Of those answering the survey, 29% have devoted 11-20 years with the same firm; 28% have spent 5-10 years with their company; 25% have less than 5 years of service with their current firm; and 18% have put in more than 20 years of service with the same firm.

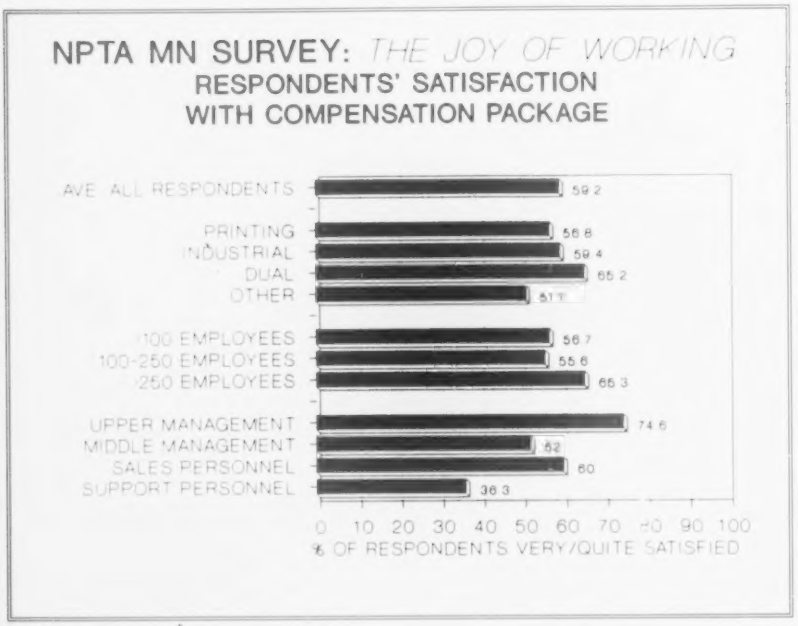
Share In Success

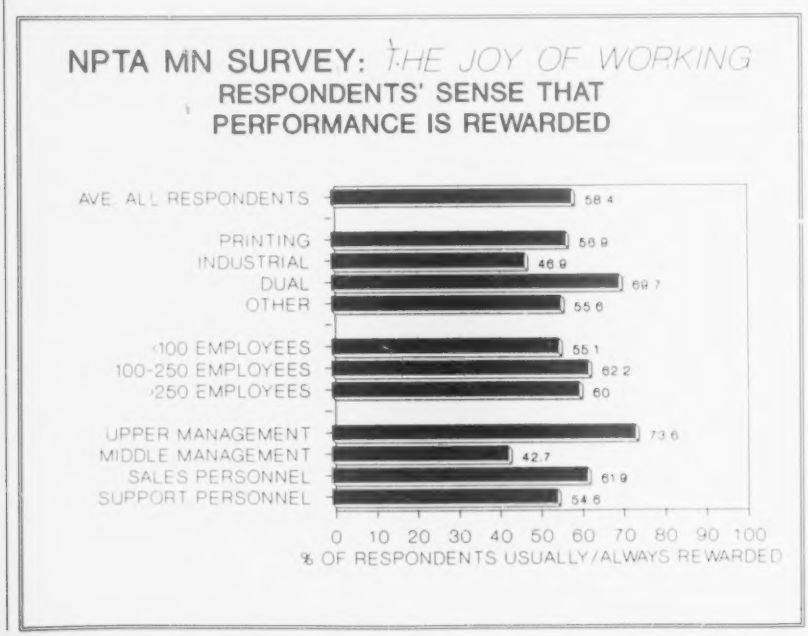
In all likelihood, the high level of job satisfaction *MN* has uncovered is based on how respondents view their company and how they feel they are being treated. For instance, when asked if they felt that they shared in their company's success, 79.6% felt that they shared a considerable amount. As expected, a greater number of upper management types felt this way, compared with those on lower levels. What's more, as mentioned previously, the bigger the company the greater the chance of feeling a part of things. About 84% of those respondents who work for a company with more than 250 employees said they had a sense of sharing in their company's success. The percentages become smaller as the size of the firm decreases.

In another way to measure job satisfaction, the NPTA survey asked respondents whether they were happy with their compensation package. According to the results, more than half said they were quite satisfied with what they were offered. Again, the largest firms apparently are aiming to please: 65.3% of those respondents who work for the largest companies voiced satisfaction in this category; 55.6% of those who are employed









by mid-size firms were pleased; and 56.7% of those in the smallest firms were content with their compensation package. In addition, respondents who work for dual companies expressed satisfaction most often, followed by those employed by industrial firms, printing firms and others. More upper management executives expressed satisfaction (74.6%) than did sales personnel (60%), middle management (52%), and support personnel (36.3%).

Hand in hand with this was a sense that performance is rewarded. Almost 60% of the respondents maintained that their performance is usually or always recognized. More upper management people felt this way as opposed to sales and support personnel. In fact, less than half of middle management respondents had a sense that their work is acknowledged in some way or form. In light of these statistics, perhaps some distributors should re-evaluate their reward system to emphasize achievement. This need not mean investing substantial amounts of money. Employee of the Week (or Month) awards, Secretaries Day and other events are inexpensive but effective ways to recognize a job well done.

Expectations Are Known

Nevertheless, most corporations are communicating more thoroughly and more often, according to survey figures. Close to three-quarters of all respondents have a basic sense of what is expected of them. That's pretty much the case for those working in small firms (74%), in mid-size concerns (61.3%) and large businesses (76%); in printing paper houses (70%), industrial (66.1%), and dual companies (78.4%).

At the same time, corporations are sharing information with their staff, which gives employees the feeling that they are an important part of the company. Nearly 64% of all respondents said their superiors informed them quite often. This is in keeping with 1988 figures. Last year, about two-thirds of respondents felt their superiors shared information on a regular basis. Once again, employees from the largest firms led the field (68.9%), followed by mid-size distributors (64.5%) and small companies (59%). Of course, a little over 80% of upper management respondents said they felt they knew what

(Continued on page 40)

ZELLERBACH, A MEAD COMPANY

Fresno, CA

NELDA SCHMITZ
Executive Secretary 1946

WILLIE TERRY
Operations Superyisor 1947

Detroit, MI

JIM RAMSAY
Sales Representative 1947

FELIX STROZEWSKI
Inventory Control 1946

HAL YOUNG
Sales Representative 1946

SURVEY/Continued from page 30

was going on, 59.5% of middle management said the same thing, sales was next at 58.4%, and support personnel followed with 50%.

Along with sharing information about the company, executives are making an effort to be more accessible to staff. *MN* survey results show that 74.7% of all respondents believe that their superiors are approachable. What's more, figures are high for all employee levels: 76.1% of upper management respondents, 74.6% of middle managers, 74.1% of salespeople, and 71.5% of support personnel, as well as all three company size categories.

One area that all distributors need to improve upon is creating advancement opportunities. On average, a little less than half of all respondents noted that they see a chance to move up in the ranks. Figures were even for all companies in terms of size (around 46%) and type (about 44%). A greater number of respondents from dual houses (53.4%) said they see advancement opportunities, probably because dual firms are usually larger.

Based on survey data, it's safe to assume that the majority of employees in the paper/plastics distribution industry enjoy their job, are proud of the company they work for and are content enough to remain there for a substantial period of time. Distributors get high marks for that, for they set the tone in ways that are real (i.e., dollars) and intangible (i.e, goodwill). But many executives/owners must do more to build the latter, especially for lower-level staff. When business is on a growth curve, it is relatively easy to share in the firm's good fortune with bonuses and salary increases. However, recognizing employees for jobs well done, creating advancement opportunities and sharing company information, among other things, are the policies that will attract and keep outstanding employees in both strong and weak periods.